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INTERIM REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE THIRD POPULATION PROGRAMME OF THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA

REPORT BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In response to Governing Council decision 93/27 C of 18 June 1993, this report provides information on the status of implementation of the third UNFPA country programme for Rwanda, 1993-1997, and the impact of the evolution of the general context of the country on the implementation of the programme.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. During its fortieth session held in June 1993 in New York, the Governing Council approved the third comprehensive population programme, 1993-1997, for Rwanda (DP/FPA/CP/129) with the provision that the Executive Director should present an interim report to the Council at its forty-first session on the implementation of the programme given the general context of the conditions in the country. The present report has been prepared in response to the decision of the Governing Council.

II. CURRENT SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY

2. At the time of the approval of the country programme in 1993, Rwanda had suffered from three years of civil war. The Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) occupied the area along the northern border with Uganda, where a demilitarized zone had been established. It is estimated that the war has caused the displacement of 900,000 people. Many of these people, especially the children, suffer from malnutrition as well as infectious and diarrhoeal diseases.

3. A peace agreement between the warring parties was reached in August 1993. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) was sent to the country to monitor the security situation and the repatriation of refugees and resettlement of displaced persons. Its presence was meant to establish a climate conducive to installing a transitional government. National elections, leading to the installation of a new Government, are expected to be held by October 1995.

III. IMPACT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

4. By the end of February 1994, the transitional Government had still not been constituted due primarily to questions related to the choice of deputies and nomination of ministers. This impasse has slowed down governmental activities, particularly in the central administration. This is particularly the case in the Ministry of Health where the appointment of a new Minister has long been awaited. However, at the operational level, activities related to maternal and child health and family planning (MCH/FP) are still being carried out.

5. During 1993, UNFPA activities in Rwanda were mainly devoted to the formulation of new projects in the fields of MCH/FP, women, population and development, and population information, education and communication (IEC). Projects in the first two of these areas were approved during the second half of the year. The project development phase did not encounter any major problems. Technical advisers, including a regional adviser from the UNFPA Country Support Team in Harare, Zimbabwe, who was brought in to assist with the preparation of the MCH/FP and women, population and development project requests, worked effectively with national counterparts and other government officials.

6. It is primarily in the IEC sector that socio-political changes may affect the implementation of the country programme. The IEC strategy developed by the National Population Office (ONAPO) -- to be implemented in three provinces, Gisenyi, Ruhengeri and Kigali -- rests strongly on the social mobilization movement established by the former one-party system Government. It is based on the use of volunteer workers to sensitize the population at the grass-roots level to family life education and to the advantages of family planning for the health of mothers and children. With the democratization process and the institution of a multi-party form of government, the volunteer workers movement has been dismantled.

7. Since a new IEC strategy now has to be put in place, ONAPO is contemplating recruiting the former volunteer workers and attaching them to regional multimedia centres. ONAPO also plans to develop an umbrella IEC project to coordinate IEC activities undertaken by various ministries, such as the Ministry of Agriculture (through its extension workers), the Ministry of Health (through health agents) and the Ministry of Social Affairs (through social workers).

8. In the area of MCH/FP, special services will have to be put in place to reach displaced persons and to respond to their specific needs. In coordination with UNICEF and international NGOs active in emergency programmes in the country, UNFPA is designing strategies to integrate family planning into emergency health services.

9. In line with the Government's policy of decentralization, the programme is concentrating its interventions in the three provinces of Gisenyi, Ruhengeri and Kigali. At present, it is possible to carry out activities throughout the first two provinces. However, the extreme northern part of Ruhengeri has been affected by the war and is currently included in the demilitarized zone. Work therefore has had to be suspended in that area.

IV. STATUS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNFPA PROGRAMME

10. Based on the findings and recommendations of UNFPA's 1992 Programme Review and Strategy Development (PRSD) mission, the overall objectives of the third comprehensive population programme were: (a) to strengthen the Government's capacity to bring the population growth rate into balance with the country's resources and environmental constraints; and (b) to assist the Government to come as close as possible to meeting the major demographic goals set forth in the population policy document officially approved in June 1990. The specific objectives of the programme are to assist the Government in reducing its annual population growth rate from the current rate of 3.4 per cent to 2.8 per cent by increasing the contraceptive prevalence rate from 12 per cent to 28 per cent and by reducing the contraceptive drop-out rate by 50 per cent and the total fertility rate from 7.9 to 6.2 children per woman by 1997.

11. An MCH/FP project, programmed for 1993-1997, was developed with the technical assistance of the regional adviser of the Harare-based Country Support Team (CST). It was approved in September 1993 in the amount of $2.5 million with a three-fold objective: (a) to assist in establishing the Ministry of Health as the leader and coordinator in the field of family planning through the reinforcement of its managerial and technical capabilities; (b) to contribute to increasing the contraceptive prevalence rate from 12 per cent to 28 per cent; and (c) to contribute to a 50 per cent decrease in maternal mortality linked to pregnancy-related problems and deliveries. Activities up to now have included setting up offices; organizing a seminar to orient the programme activities and disseminate the 1994 work plan; procuring contraceptives, equipment and vehicles; and starting the process for recruiting a long-term adviser. The project is executed by the Government and UNFPA, with technical backstopping by the Country Support Team.

12. In the area of women, population and development, a three-year project in the amount of $500,000 was approved in December 1993. Its main objectives are to reinforce the technical capabilities of the newly established Ministry for the Family and Women's Protection to: (a) develop and manage projects integrating women into the development process; and (b) elaborate an action plan for future activities. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is the executing agency. Activities await the arrival of the Chief Technical Adviser and the United Nations Volunteer. UNDP co-funds the project by providing support of $195,000 for the adviser.

13. In the area of IEC, a pre-project was approved in 1993 in the amount of $275,000 for the services of an international adviser and for support for ONAPO's voluntary interpersonal communicators. A project document for the umbrella IEC project discussed in paragraph 7 above has now been developed and is being appraised.

14. In addition to these three projects, activities related to the processing and analysis of the 1991 Population and Housing Census, undertaken by the Bureau of Census of the Ministry of Planning, are well advanced. In 1993, publications were released that analysed the Post-Enumeration Survey, presented preliminary results of the census, and analysed the main results based on a 10 per cent sample.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

15. This interim report shows that, in spite of the slow process for the institution of the transitional government, the development of the third population programme for Rwanda has had a satisfactory beginning with the approval of three projects, of which the MCH/FP project represents 43 per cent of the total amount of the programme, and the drafting of an IEC project. Activities related to the analysis and publication of the 1991 population and housing census have also progressed very satisfactorily. UNFPA therefore reaffirms the relevance of the overall objectives and strategies of the third population programme approved by the Governing Council in 1993.

16. The Executive Director recommends that the Executive Board approve the continued implementation of the third population programme for the Government of Rwanda with the modification in the IEC strategy described in paragraph 7 above.